

HOURS OF FRANCE

Paul Scott Mowrer

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HOURS OF FRANCE

HOURS *of* FRANCE IN PEACE AND WAR

BY
PAUL SCOTT MOWRER



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TO
MY MOTHER

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HOURS OF PEACE

ODE TO FRANCE

WHY do I love you?

Love is dumb, and all confused with its own
amaze.

Love is all joy, all gratitude, and all distress.

I can but bend above you,

Unveil for you whatever haunts my gaze,

And pass remembering hands along your loveliness.

In love, who knows how much be given, how much
received?

Love is a mist, a golden cloud, whereof

A vision is born, a beauty, never else achieved.

I only know. . . . I love.

SPRING NIGHT

HIGH in my window I lean to the night and the
wind.

Spring, and the potence of passion its labors dis-
till,

Course to the quick of me: far in a lap of the hill,
I would be wandering whither the wild in me
will—

Breathing the perfume of earth, of the rain-
flooded grass,

Merging my life in the life of all creatures that
pass,

Winging with birds, drinking deep with the oak
by the rill—

Lost in the ache and the urge of the night and the
wind.

THE HILLSIDE

WELL I love the long horizon
In its bridal gown of wheat;
But there comes a gayer greeting
From the hillside at my feet,
Where the tiniest lives are lispings
Joy the very stones repeat.

For in springtime, on the hillside,
There is courting everywhere.
First a rout of twittering birds
Frolic swiftly through the air,
Flit to cover, bubble music,
Stop to prink, or fly to pair.

Then a wind is in the grasses,
There is laughing in the leaves;
Not a flower but dips and dances
To the kisses it receives
From the creatures winging round it
Like a gaudy band of thieves.

THE HILLSIDE

And I loll among the daisies,
Idly happy; and the sun,
Groping golden through the branches,
Bids me let my fancy run;
And I lose myself in musing,
Till the mellow day is done.

But at evening, when the cowbells
Tinkle homeward to the town,
And the silver lights of sunset
Shed their final glory down,
Well I love the long horizon
In its quiet wedding gown.

ORDER

It is half past eight on the blossomy bush:
The petals are spread for a sunning;
The little gold fly is scrubbing his face;
The spider is nervously running
To fasten a thread; the night-going moth
Is folding his velvet perfection;
And presently over the clover will come
The bee on a tour of inspection.

ROGUERY

A LINNET in the linden tree
Hid himself, and saucily
He mocked the wind, who gave a shout
And tried to shake the linnet out.

The minnows in the stream below
Slid uneasy to and fro,
Wondering why there fell on them
Such a shower of leaf and stem.

I sat upon the bridge between,
And wished, instead, I might have seen
What pranks are played in heaven when
The fear of God descends on men.

EGOISM

WHEN swarming buds, like yellow bees,
Tremble upon the willow trees,
Beside the broad and sinewy stream
I sit and spin my sunny dream;
A dream of groves and grassy hills
In a land where beauty soothes all ills—
A land of men who love, like me,
Music and art and poetry,
With women, ever young again,
Who only love that kind of men.
The ripples clapping at my feet,
Applaud the grace of this conceit,
But the minnows find it little worth,
And leap aloud in glittering mirth.

SUMMER NIGHT

GOING up the village hill
On a summer night,
Between a pair of cottages
I saw a lovely sight:
Pallid on a silver sky
Hung a chalky moon;
And under it, a rosy cloud,
Delicately hewn,
Was floating like a lazy fish.
—That, I think was all.
But I was pleased, and long I lingered,
Leaning on the wall.

AFTER RAIN

AFTER rain the air is cool, and clover-scented;
Peace is on the mothering land: it has confessed
The season's pain to heaven, and been with pity
blessed;
The blossoms wear a smile, the branches breathe
contented,
Birds resume their song, and as the breezes
freshen,
The white and holy clouds depart in slow pro-
cession.

TWILIGHT

A FISH leaped up—and all was still ;
A moth flew by, there was no sound.
Only a red star on the hill
Fluttered the dusk that closed around.

Kneeling among the prayerful reeds,
I watched the evening dim the air,
I heard the waters telling their beads,
And night came down, and found me there.

HARVEST MOON

A RABBIT hopped from out the wood
To seek his mate; I saw them meet
Where like the tents of summer stood
The shadowy shocks of wheat.

The old hilltop was wrapped in night;
But when the moon appeared above,
I knew, the way she smiled so bright,
She too was full of love.

I tossed a kiss, though she was fair
Beyond all homage I could give;
And after-awhile I said a prayer
For all the things that live.

For everything that lives and loves
I fashioned thoughts of kindness
That rose like shining flights of doves
In feathery moonbeam dress.

HARVEST MOON

And when the world was white with joy,
I turned and climbed the pasture gate,
But had a care lest I annoy
The rabbit with his mate.

OCTOBER GARDEN

THE leaves upon the water lie,
Where down they quiver, one by one,
Although the wind has left the sky,
And mist is on the sun.

The fish in filmy quiet lie,
Pouting as with a secret wish;
And lovers wander slowly by,
As quiet as the fish.

APRIL

AGAIN the flowers of spring, in a mist of color,
Veil the meads, and cling in a cloud to hillsides;
Once again the tide in the breast that bore us
Floods to the season.

Brown brook-water, dipped in the hands held
cup-wise,
Young white-rooted grass, to be tasted slowly—
These I long for, now that the winds of April
Carry their flavor.

IN BRITTANY.

FETE-DAY AT PLOU

IF your faith is as rich as your pocket is poor,
And you travel all night on the broken sea-moor,
You may happen by luck—though it's not very
sure—

To be present at Plou on a fête-day.

There's a crowd in the church to partake of the
mass;

There's a crowd somewhat younger outside on
the grass,

And each lad says a prayer in the ear of his lass,
For the people are pious on fête-day.

In sweet-foaming cider and bright eau-de-vie,
The men drink the praise of the Virgin Marie;
It makes a man thirsty to follow the sea,
And it makes a man dull to be sober.

The women are coiffed in contortions of lace;
They stand in a ring, and decree the disgrace

FETE-DAY AT PLOU

Of all who have strayed from the rules of the
place,

For at Plou they hold court on a fête-day.

The children are washed and their feet are in
shoes,

They carry balloons of extravagant hues,
And each has a sweet which he lustily chews,
For the pennies are plenty on fête-day.

And beggars? The beggars who beg of you
there.

Are the jolliest beggars you'll meet anywhere:
They are covered with clams, they have crabs
in their hair,

And they break all their legs for a fête-day.

At night, when the people are snoring in bed,
The souls of their ancestors rise from the dead,
For at Plou, you must know, it shall never be
said

That a ghost has lain quiet on fête-day.

I will leave my old living and shoulder my sack
And take to the moor by the crooked goat-track.

FETE-DAY AT PLOU

If I have any luck, I will never come back,
For I'll settle in Plou until doomsday.

O the country of Plou is the country for me!
I'll sail with the fishermen over the sea,
I'll grow a great beard, and drink bright eau-
de-vie,
And wear a black coat on a fête-day.

SEA-CRAGS

I WILL bring her to this place,

It is so beautiful.

There never was a bluer sea,

Nor ever whiter butterflies

Drifted out in ecstasy

Over gentler waves, or under softer skies.

And I will watch delight possess her face,

Delight so beautiful.

I will lead her to this pool;

It is so beautiful,

With opal waters, rosy moss,

Algae green as mermaid's hair,

And golden crabs that slide across

The shell-encrusted rocks, or wave their claws
and stare.

She will love this garden strange and cool,

Which is so beautiful.

I will climb these rocks with her,

They are so beautiful—

SEA-CRAGS

The red chaotic granite isles
The falling tide leaves access to,
Tall as towers, in grottoed piles
With cavernous channels deep, the waters
thunder through.

And she will scale with me this craggy spur,
Which is so beautiful.

I will seat her in this nook,

It is so beautiful—

A fairy nook, with grassy pillows,
Enclosed with cliffs and hung with flowers,
Opening over murmurous billows
Where the fishing boats outsail the sunny
hours.

And here upon her rapture I shall look,
Which is so beautiful.

TWO SEASONS

IN May the fields were smoothly green,
The gorse was golden on the bough,
And fairer time was never seen,
I said, than here and now.

In August, when I came again,
The gorse was dark, the stubble bare,
But heather hemmed the pasture lane,
And all was just as fair.

DARLING DAY

O DAY, your voice is sweet as many birds,
Singing together!

Your speech is lovelier than gemmy words,
Or sunny weather!

Your breasts are soft and cool as grassy moss,
Your eyes are pools where sunlight flits,
And honeyed as the airs that blow across
The clover, are your lips!

Oh, I have loved you truly, darling day,
With long caresses;
And would that I might clip from you a spray
Of golden tresses!

Then might I kiss your memory many times,
In many a lonesome dawn;
Then clasp you yet more close than in these
rhymes,
Dear day, when you are gone!

A FOOLISH SONG

As I was going along, going along,
The sky was blue, the meadows bright,
The river, too, all flecked with light!
I smiled upon that pretty sight

As I was going along.

As I was going along, going along,
There came a bird, there came a breeze,
The thicket stirred with melodies
And never songs were sweet as these,

As I was going along.

As I was going along, going along,
I met a maid who led a lamb,
And I delayed—fool that I am!—
For her eyes in limpid laughter swam

As I was going along.

As I was going along, going along,
I thought of breeze and bird and maid,
The sunny trees, the tender shade,
And out of them a song I made

As I was going along.

HARVEST DANCE

THE clouds are dancing over the bay,
Scattering colors as they run;
Blue and green and purple and gray
Fade in the shadow and flash in the sun.

The breezes pipe from wood to field;
A giddy seagull courtesies low
Where kneeling washerwomen wield
Their paddles by the winding flow.

The farmer's flail is never still;
It flings the chaff to every gust;
And merrily, in his creaking mill,
The miller stacks the silver dust.

FISHERMEN'S WISDOM

THE fishermen are very wise—

They know the ways of God,
How some shall sleep beneath the sea
As others under the sod.

They fill their pipes, they spit or puff,
And grouped along the quay,
Of weather, luck, and prices they
Complain contentedly.

MIST ON THE MOOR

WAS it only the wind—the gray wind?
Or somebody lost in the waste of the sea?
Voices, cries!—from the empty cliffs!—
Where none should be!

And what was that—by the old stone?
The bracken shivers as if in dread,
And shapes of mist go shuddering by
Like souls of the dead.

Those cries again! Now which is the path
To the little house? I have stayed too long!
There's a sweet fire in the little house,
And the door is strong.

THE PHANTOM WASHER- WOMAN

TURN the broom, and shut the door!
Hang the tripod off the floor!
Empty water on the ground!
—As I was coming past the meadow spring—
It's dark to-night—I couldn't see a thing
At first, but then I heard a dripping sound!
There was a woman kneeling on a stone,
A stranger, dipping her linen all alone!
Her eyes were queer, her arms were long and
white!
Oh, shut the door and bolt it tight!
She spoke—she asked me would I do
The wringing—but I ran, because I knew
It was the Washer-Woman of the Night.

So turn the broom! Shut the door!
Hang the tripod off the floor!
Scatter suds along the sill!

THE PHANTOM WASHER-WOMAN

—What makes that noise? What makes the candle flare?

Some one is walking in the dark out there!

Don't answer! Maybe she'll go 'way! Be very still!

THE VOICE OF THE DEAD

Out of the weary sea, the moan of a wave;
Out of the quiet sky, the note of a bird:
All that is vast and deep will utter its word—
All that is vast and deep—even the grave.

Parting the dreams of night, the dead come back;
And heart, be still! Put under your sharp dis-
may!

Hearken, my heart, for we shall become as they,
Echoes and whispers, haunting the lonely black.

Whispers and memories only—that is our lot?
Who but the dead can say, when all is said?
Soft as the voice of love is the voice of the dead:
Listening heart, fear not, fear not, fear not!

THE HOUR OF WOE-BETIDE

THE western clouds, inflamed and swollen, have
swallowed the dying sun,

And over the darkling waters, pools of coppery
bloodstain run,

For now is the hour of primal dreams, the hour
that all would shun.

The great rocks heave their shoulders up from
the outward setting tide

Like a shoal of black sea-monsters feeding shore-
ward side by side,

And now is the hour that all would shun, the
hour of woe-betide.

Like a masthead-light on a fated ship that knows
it nears its doom,

The evening star goes flickering dim through
deepening banks of gloom,

For now is the hour of woe-betide, the hour when
phantoms loom.

THE HOUR OF WOE-BETIDE

Deathly chill, a breeze in silence creeps to the
land on a wave,

And stifling chill the breath of it, the stony
breath of a grave,

For now is the hour when phantoms loom, the
hour that spirits crave.

And what was the tale the fishermen told, and
swore to its truth—all three,

How out in the night they saw the dead go by
in the trough of the sea?

Now is the hour that spirits crave, the hour of
mystery.

The sky is dark with writhing forms, and faint
the water gleams;

Conspiring tongues below the rocks mutter their
evil schemes,

And now is the hour of mystery, the hour of
primal dreams.

ALL NIGHT

ALL night, at quaking doors and throbbing eaves,
That horde of souls cry out and beat their wings,
Sadder than any wind that sobs and grieves
In chimney-places, telling evil things;
Sadder and wilder far than any wind
That round some lonely cottage moans and sings,
Telling of hope that failed and love that sinned:
All night they cry and groan and beat their
wings.

O dead unhappy ones, fly far away!
Go where the gorse is black upon the moors,
Moan to the patient skies your sobbing lay
Of joy too brief, and sorrow that endures.
Why must you come and keep kind sleep at bay
Where honest folk seek rest, their honest due,
Beating your wings and crying out, till they
Await the dawn as woebegone as you?

THE OLD WOMEN OF THE MOOR

WHEN on the moor a howling wind
Beats in the bracken all the night,
Sometimes the hurrying traveler sees,
Amid the gloom, a lonely light.

Within a hut, beside a hearth
Where smokes a little fire of broom,
Three bent old women, thin and pale,
Are occupied till crack of doom.

And one is turning griddle-cakes,
Sitting in cinders on the floor,
But every time a cake is done,
The plate is empty as before.

And one has got a chicken bone;
She sucks and sucks with greedy lips,
But has no sooner swallowed it
Than at her lean throat out it slips.

THE OLD WOMEN OF THE MOOR

And one is crouching on her knees,
Counting a pile of copper sous,
But always, as she nears the end,
Forgets, and straight her count renews.

Then let the night be black and wild,
And loudly let the chill wind wail,
But go not near the lonely light,
Those bent old women, thin and pale.

He who should eat those griddle-cakes,
Or with that bone his hunger stay,
Or count or touch those copper sous
Must haunt the moor till Judgment Day.

CORRIGANS

By the gap in the wall,
Where the ant-people crawl,
And the bee-people pass
To the blossomy grass,
I was lying this night,
Covered over from sight
In a tumble of bracken and may.

I was thinking how far
It might be to a star,
I was lost in a muse,
When my ear gave me news
Of the scamper and beat
Of wee pattering feet
Not the span of a swallow away.

I made half a turn,
And there through the fern,
In reach of my hand,
Went a corrigan band!

CORRIGANS

Did they flutter, or run,
As they leaped one by one
Through the gap to the meadow be-
yond?

They were merry to see—
Not as high as my knee,
Yet each roguishly dressed
In green trousers and vest;
And all were pop-eyed,
And their mouths were too wide,
And each had a thornapple wand.

When the last hurried through,
I got up from the dew
To look over the wall;
And there they stood all
On the lawn in a ring:
They were starting to sing,
And this was the way of their song:

“On a Monday we trip it,
On Tuesday we skip it,
There’s Wednesday for working
And Thursday for shirking,
But Friday is blest,

CORRIGANS

And a plague on the rest,
For the week, it is ages too long!"

To this curious rhyme
They went circling in time;
Their voices were keyed
Like the plaint of a reed;
And the stars, gleaming down,
Gave each dancer a crown,
And the pasture was jeweled with light.

Ever faster the feet;
Ever sweet and more sweet
That enchanted complaint;
Ever faint and more faint,
And sweeter and frailer
And farther and paler,
Till all were absorbed in the night.

There's a quaint little beat
That I often repeat;
There's a tune in my heart
That will never depart;
There's a thought in my brain
That is stronger than pain—
A wisdom of lowly delight.

HOURS OF WAR

TRICOLOR

RED are the poppies,
Blue are the cornflowers,
Over the dead

White are the crosses
Flecking the young wheat
Far and wide.

Softly the breezes
Cradle the blossoms
Blue and red,

Over the wheat-birth
Tenderly crooning
Where they died.

PASTORAL

VILLAGE, empty now, and laid in ruin,
Who will raise your walls against the rain?
Pasture, where the sheep were wont to wander,
Will the shepherd ever come again?

Wood, poor blackened wood where passed the
battle,

How should bough of yours again be green?
Field—oh, ploughed and sown indeed, but barren,
Long the reaper waits, and waits in vain.

THE SLEEPER IN THE VALLEY

(After the French of Jean Arthur Rimbaud)

It is a leafy glade where sings a stream,
Hanging the grass with rags of silver bright,
Where from the mountain falls a sunny beam;
It is a little vale a-foam with light.
His shoulders bathed in cresses fresh and blue,
A soldier, young, mouth open, bare of head,
Stretched out beneath the sky, sleeps in the dew,
Pale where the light rains down on his green bed.
His feet in irises, beside the river,
He sleeps and smiles like a sick child at rest.
Cradle him warmly, Nature; he is cold.
The perfume does not make his nostril quiver.
There in the sun he sleeps, with hand on breast,
So still. In his right side are two red holes.

THE CAUSE

LET but the cause seem beautiful, dear God,
If we must die! Make us believe, in truth,
It is for all mankind we give our youth—
To stay till end of time the oppressor's rod;
That but for us, harsh power would ride rough-
shod .

Through freedom's delicate gardens, and the
tooth

Of hatred rend our people without ruth:
So may we sleep content below the sod.
But else—! Who knows what gladness here on
earth

Was destined us, what high and sweet employ?
O hard it is that youth should cease to be!
For now came love, with a great glad rebirth,
To company our way, and now came joy!
—Not death we fear, but death's futility.

BARBED WIRE

THERE lies a tangled vineyard in a land
Where none may go, nor mind of man conceive;
A drunken god, creative in a dream,
The like disaster scarcely could achieve.

Such sickness there befouls the breast of earth
As rots the very roots of life away—
A black eruption, a devouring pox:
Yet flourishes that vineyard day by day.

Its tendrils brave the coldest winter wind;
Its branches never bend beneath the rain;
And hardly do they feel the burning hail
That smites incessant on that land of pain.

September comes, but here no harvest is,
No purple clusters deck the curling vine;
Gray is the vineyard, gray and full of thorns,
Yet from its tangles drips a ruddy wine.

DEATH

THEN Death, since we must trust ourselves to you,
Leave off the joys that we were dreaming of,
The troubles we were sure to rise above,
The deeds of grace and skill we meant to do;
Since we must leave behind this earth's fair hue,
This sound of life with laughter interwove,
The city's friendly streets, the lips we love,
And all the strong desires men cling unto,
Let us become acquainted not too slowly,
Not in the gradual way of ebb and pain,
O hospitable Death, but swift and fain,
Heart unto heart, and each accepting wholly!
For you, another guest; for me, release;
For you, a friend; for me, an early peace.

TO THE MEMORY OF KIFFIN YATES ROCKWELL

(American Aviator)

You who fought for France with a mystic passion,

Soaring fierce and lonely above the thunder,

Fiery one, aggressor in fifty combats,

Ever the bravest;

We, who knew your look, and the noble sweetness,

All your high disdain for the death you smiled on,

Bend our thought in reverence down before you—

Fallen in beauty.

THE LIEUTENANT AWAKENS IN HOSPITAL

I KNOW my own mind, doctor! Let me go!
Let go my wrist. We must retake the farm!
They hiss like red-hot beetles in my ears,
They crush, they never stop. No, no, no, no!
Oh, not my leg! Oh, doctor, not my leg!
Damn you, sir, let me up. I want to walk.
The captain fell, I tell you—through the head.
Already dawn is creeping past the church
And down the pasture lane. They come too late.
I hear machine-guns coughing in the mist.
Write this report: the color of pain is red
And black on hills of gray. He died a man.
Grenades at fifteen yards! Now, boys, once more!
I charge, with all my heart, with all my soul!

TO A POET, MOBILIZED

WE used to see you leaning by the river,
Your errand all forgot, watching the flow
Of dappled light, or upstream thrust and quiver
Of tugs with laden barges lashed in tow.

Such love was in your heart as children know
Before the embittered brain begins to ponder;
On every passerby your eyes would throw
Their gentle understanding, or their wonder.

The free-sworn friend of lowly life, your ways
Were quiet as pansies, and as quaintly proud;
A spell was in your music, as of days
To kindness and the faith of beauty vowed.

And now you write, your company led the van
On that accursèd hillside! O our friend,
May all the spirits guardian over man
Make miracles about you to the end!

TO A POET, MOBILIZED

Then we will kiss the horror from your eyes,
And bid you charm us as you used to do.
Come back again! for beauty never dies,
But those who keep the faith are very few.

TO A CIRCUS CLOWN, KILLED IN BATTLE

THE moon is white as paint to-night.
With spotted face, it leers around
A flap of cloud, as if to fright
The earth, and laughs without a sound.

A cannon gives a shout of "Boo!"
Behind the hill. A cricket squeaks.
The frogs that antic in the slough
Cry "Ouch!" as if exchanging tweaks.

A tree stoops innocently down
Beside the stream. The rowdy breeze
Gives it a push. It wets its gown
And stays absurdly on its knees.

You do not hear the boo-ing gun,
Or see the creatures at their tricks;
For you the sorry jest is done:
You lie beneath a pair of sticks.

SHELLS

LIKE a rally of witches who scream through the
sky,

Like warlocks who gallop the moon-shattered
cloud;

Like soul-drunken demons who wing with a cry
To fasten their fangs in a new-buried shroud;

From black-wooded valley, from thicket and hole,
They moan through the midnight, affrighting the
air,

To meet in a crowd on the desolate knoll,
And dance until dawn in the misty moon-glare.

The trample and roll of their hoofs is a sound
That startles to anguish the shuddering night,
And the flash of their hoofs, as they stamp on
the ground,

Is a glitter, a blazing, a stabbing of light.

Like giants who caper, like genii of ill,
With vaporous bodies and flame-bearing feet,

SHELLS

They kick and reel backward and leap, till the
hill

Is a lightning-lit cloud where they circle and
meet.

Now left and now right lean the turbulent forms;
The red flashes glitter now over, now under;
Now upward, now outward they fling their dark
arms;

The firmament crashes and rocks to their thunder.

Like giants, like genii frenzied with ire,
Now leaping, now writhing, they stagger and
sway;

With earth-quaking tread and a striking of fire,
They stamp and they dance till the dawning of
day.

The pale eye of day gazes down on the ground
Where their violent festival trampled the mud;
The knoll is as bare as a funeral mound;
Its verges are kneaded with branches and blood.

THE FIELD OF GLORY

No flower, but thorny fires that prick the vision;
No grass, but clods as blank and gray as death;
Monster growths of blackly writhing smoke-
 spray,

Shedding sickly scents that cut the breath;

No bees, but humming, whining, unseen hornets;
No birds, but something vast that rocks the air;
Thunders, as when chaos baulked creation;
Silences, as pallid as despair.

TO A LARK IN PICARDY

SING to the sun! Amid the crash of shells,
Leap up, O lark, and have your ecstasy!
Shake out that sound of joy like tinkling bells!
Mount higher yet on buoyant wings of glee!

The race of bird and man is very old,
And none may count the generations gone;
With broken wing, or forehead bruised and cold,
Each droops at last beyond the call of dawn.

The sun, that now pours forth a plenteous light
Alike on slayer and slain, nor turns away,
Has gazed of old on many a tragic sight:
Seek him! Take hope of him, in this dark day!

What matters it how thick the shells be hurled?
Soar up, and have your ecstasy, and sing!
What though mankind go mad, and wreck the
world?

Leap up in joy! O sing, and soar, and sing!

HOME ON LEAVE

(Colloque Sentimental)

To the clanking sound of trains that come and go,
Two figures, clinging close, are speaking low.

"Must you go back—to that red emptiness—
The muddy trench, the dreary waiting?" "Yes."

"Is there no secret way?" "There is no way."

"And you will write?" "As often as I may."

"But if no letter comes, or mails are slow?"

"I have a comrade; he will let you know."

"At least be prudent—this I beg of you."

"I only do what all the others do."

"And still you see no hope, no gleam of light?"

"Not yet. . . . No end this year. . . . Good
night."

NOVEMBER, 1916

THE light is pale, the skies are thick with cloud
Beyond the yellow wood, whose tattered boughs
In shuddering emptiness
Enfold the silent hill.

Like littered leaves that rise upon a wind,
There swirls above the wood a flock of crows,
And long they eddy there
With lift and falling turn.

Why should November come again, when all
Our days are now so like the dying year—
The same enclouded skies,
And black ill-omened birds?

AN OFFICER'S BURIAL

BEHIND the wailing horns and rolling drums,
Between the files of riflemen in blue,
The coffin on a gray gun-carriage comes,
Wrapped in a flag, with flowers of golden hue.

A horse upon whose back no rider is,
Bewildered walks behind the colored pall;
And after, march the sullen ranks of men
Who all too lately saw their leader fall.

Their cheeks are thin, their eyes are darkly set,
As on some vision moving in their minds.
And now the slow cortege has left the town,
And toward the meadow's crowded crosses winds.

The drums are still. By twice a thousand dead
They bear their one dead more, where hawthorne
shades

A bank of clay, and two old men climb up,
And wipe their sweaty brows, and clean their
spades.

ANOTHER BURIAL

THE stretcher-bearers pause, and lower their
burden,

Where lie in a row, upon the watery plain,
Eleven shapes, like sculptures marred and broken,
Brought hither from some ruinous altar of pain.

The men at work in the ditch put by their shovels,
Shake off their mud, and all in the silent rain,
Bury the twisted shapes, and drive a stake in,
Should any one wish to come to the place again.

AT SUPPER TIME

FROM burrowed huts below the hill
The smokes of evening fires ascend;
With winter's mist and clammy chill
Odors of burning hemlock blend.

A drowsy thunder mutters low:
Midway the slope, four shells explode!
Like flowers of hell, in flame they blow
Where climbs a trench in mazy road.

Between its winding walls of brown,
Three men went up with pails of broth;
Three men went up—two men come down,
Bearing a form beneath a cloth.

BOIS DES BUTTES, 1917

A WEEK ago the battle filled the wood
With crashing shells in lawn and leafy alley.
To-day the guns are still, the dead may sleep:
The wood is full of lilies-of-the-valley.

Their unresisting multitudes have won
The bloody glades, the long-disputed dells:
Around the fallen oaks, and fallen men,
They lift the creamy clusters of their bells.

A week ago the hot and salty smoke
To deeds of valor stung the panting breath.
Now nothing stirs: the mild air only tells
Of lilies-of-the-valley, and of death.

INSCRIPTION FOR A TRENCH

HERE may no man lift up his head, and live.
The furies rush and bellow, night and day,
Mysterious creatures whimper through the air,
Yet none may know their face, or what they say.
Medusa turned the gazer's form to stone:
Here he who dares to look becomes as clay.

A WIND THAT BLOWS FROM PICARDY

DARK-EYED girl in the garden close,
Hemming the sheet so fine and white,
Why do you start when falls a rose?
The full-blown rose was his delight.

Brown-haired woman, quiet and wan,
Pressing a babe to the heavy breast—
The breast he loved to slumber on—
Why do you stir with strange unrest?

Gray-haired mother, kneeling alone,
Plucking the weeds from the pansy-bed—
The gentle flowers he called his own—
Why do you pause and lift your head?

A wind that blows from Picardy—
From Picardy, where lie the slain—
A wind that blows from Picardy
Is breathing low beside the lane.

THE FOLLY OF AGE

OLD men with wooden leg or empty sleeve
Will sit at last, and scold and sigh and fret,
Talking of trench and shell at Auberive,
Or mud and rain in Flanders, with regret.

And basking through the peaceful afternoons,
"The times have sadly dwindled," they will say.
"The lads who fought at Dixmude and the dunes
Were not, thank God, like these young men
to-day."

HILL 119

A HUNDRED years from now, when summer nights
Are deep and still above the dreamy grain,
When moonlight on the mossy village roofs
Falls in a flood, and whitens lawn and lane,

Some lone belated peasant, quick with wine,
Or weak of wit, or weary unto trance,
Staggering up the road, will see, perhaps,
A vision of the curse that fell on France

A hundred years ago: the quaking sky
Will crash and sigh and moan in agonies;
A fiery tossing host will trample down
Village and grain and grove and poplar trees.

Once more the pitted hill will shake and groan;
Once more, through eddying smoke and claps of
fire,

The long thin line will struggle up the slope
To perish in the thorny webs of wire.

HILL 119

And then the sight will fade, the moon will smile
As tranquil as before on roof and bough.
Only a midnight shudder in the leaves
Will stir the hill, a hundred years from now.

MEMORY

MEMORY

I WALKED alone at eventide.

Behind me lay the melancholy hills where sank
the sun;

Before, a darkening slope, a winding road.

And lo, as I reached the summit, at my side

I heard a host of little footfalls patter and run—

A flock of sheep! and at their head a cloaked
shepherd strode.

Below me lay the village, their abode.

The smoke above its purple roofs was blue

As was the twilight gathered there,

As blue as night, or memory, and I knew

Somewhere,

In another land, an age of gold,

I too had led my sheep at evening to their fold,

And I was very old.

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